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THE BRITISH ELECTION

By Montgomery Belgion

What Socialism has once done cannot be readily undone. That is the lesson which is going to be driven home in Britain following the October elections. And that points to something else. In Wells's first fantasy, The Time Machine, the narrator found himself projected in time into a world of two separate races, one that lived above ground and one that lived below. So the evidence of the ballot box is that Britain is now inhabited by two distinct races, who may be called Forkers and Spooners.

After six years of the sweets of office, Labor has been driven into opposition, and the Conservatives are behind the counter. But there can be no turning back to pre-1945. It is a stern warning to all those elsewhere who fancy that Socialism should at least be given a trial. Once tried, Socialism persists.

For one thing, the new British government enjoys a slender majority. Its supporters in Parliament number twenty-seven more than the Opposition, and eighteen more than all other parties combined. That is not the sign of a popular demand to be fearless and firm. But it correctly reflects the feeling of the country. Few things could be more foolish than to imagine that the change of government means that the English people have had enough of Socialism.

It is true that a climax of unhappy events had made all too plain the swift-growing incapacity of Mr. Attlee's team. The dollar gap, the European trade deficit, the spectre of inflation, fuel shortage, Persian oil and Egyptian claims on the Sudan -- of none of these matters was the handling masterly.

It is true that a veteran champion of Liberalism, Professor Gilbert Murray, had urged all Liberals to vote Conservative on this occasion, proclaiming his fears that Socialism had got England into a mess and that unless arrested it would complete the country's ruin.

It is true that on the eve of the poll two influential newspapers, The Times in London (which is nominally independent but usually supports the government) and the Manchester Guardian in the North (the great organ

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of Liberalism), had come out with their main editorial articles almost identically headed, and that the sound of the heading was like a knell: "Time for a Change". The second paper added an interrogation mark, but left its meaning in no suspense. It summed up the eighteen months since the last election as a period of "impotence and fumbling". Nevertheless the figures show that rather more than half the voters are well pleased with Socialism and want only that it shall go on.

II

What Mill called "representative government" sounds of course very fine, and yet, as Mill himself did not refuse to recognize, a means of selecting representatives that shall satisfy everybody has never been adopted. The suffrage, as it operates, for example, in England, is capable of effecting surprises. In 1945 twenty-six out of every fifty voters were against Labor, and yet Labor representatives were returned in 394 out of a total of 640 constituencies. Mr. Attlee had the huge overall majority of 148. In 1951, while the Conservatives won the more seats, Labor polled the more votes. The difference was not great, the Conservatives having 48 per cent of the popular suffrage and Labor 49 per cent. The remaining 3 per cent went to the Liberals. The numbers too are significant. In 1945 fewer than twelve million voted for Labor; in 1951, nearly fourteen million. Such figures a Conservative government with a narrow parliamentary majority cannot ignore.

Furthermore, the Conservatives are sure to keep an eye on the next election. They know that they will secure no working majority then without the substantial support of trade unionists. The unions affiliated with the Trade Union Congress muster approximately eight million members. With their wives they come to near a third of the total electorate. No doubt the unions founded and finance the Labor party. They put up many Labor candidates. They and the Trade Union Congress urge members to vote Labor. But there is in trade unionism a large body for the Conservatives to woo. The levy from trade unionists for the maintenance of the Labor party is voluntary, and only five million trade unionists pay it.

Hence, the new British government will sponsor no trade union heresies. It may be against the closed shop. It may condemn attempts by local authorities to dictate to their employees what unions these should join. It may consider that civil servants do wrong in belonging to unions with political associations. It may want less compulsion exercised in the collection of political levies. But apparently it does not intend to legislate in any such matters. Also it is pledged not reenact the

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Trade Disputes Act which was passed after the general strike in 1926 and repealed by the Labor government twenty years later.

III

The road away from Socialism is barred in another way. In the last fifteen years, English poverty has been in full retreat. The information is disclosed in a newly published report on social conditions in the city of York, the result of a survey made last year. The survey is the third for which Mr. Seebohm Rowntree, whose name is equally famous for cocoa and chocolate and as a Quaker, has been responsible. The first was carried out in 1899, and the second in 1936.

Whereas in 1936 nearly two persons in every eleven in York were found to be in poverty, only two in every one hundred-eighteen were so found in 1950. Mr. Rowntree's standard of poverty is uncompromising. At the prices of 1950, he considers no married couple with three children to be poor unless, after paying rent and taxes, their income, including the value of school meals, subsidized milk, home-grown vegetables and other receipts in kind, was under $14 a week. He has been careful to allow for price changes in the intervals between his surveys. In 1936 the biggest cause of poverty was the inadequacy of earnings, two-fifths of all poverty being due to it. Three-tenths of poverty resulted from unemployment, three-tenths from sickness, old age, widowhood.

For the startling improvement which had occurred by 1950, the reduction in unemployment and the rise in real earnings account for about one-third, and the remaining two-thirds are attributable to welfare measures such as rent restriction, housing and food subsidies, the national health service, and better organized public assistance. Mr. Rowntree gives about half the credit for the diminution of poverty to food subsidies and less than half to other welfare measures.

Now, although neither Labor nor the Conservatives can claim that the reduction of English poverty has been their sole handiwork, it is undeniable that the welfare measures which are stated to have achieved so much, have a strong element of Socialism about them. Poverty could possibly have been reduced in other ways. That does not matter. A Conservative government today, and especially one with a narrow majority, is bound to continue along the road previously traced out.

IV

What of private enterprise? What of investment and incentive? There again the mark of Socialism is likely to prove ineffaceable.

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It is true that the Conservatives are pledged to repeal the Iron and Steel Act passed by their predecessors last spring with the tiniest of majorities. (They have not yet divulged how it is to be done.) It is true that the Conservative election manifesto announced that the coal mines would be decentralized. It is true that private truck owners are assured that they will be given the chance to resume business, and that at the end of October a scheme for implementing this was made public. To the generality of business people such prospects are not of much importance. If Britain is still in the main a country of private enterprise, it is owing to small and medium sized businesses. What has irked the men and women who conducted those businesses under Socialism has been that they were hindered and obstructed by a host of regulations, by quotas, licenses and oppressive taxation. If trade and industry are to prosper in a country like England, they need to be allowed flexibility of structure, scope for change and freedom to grow.

The Conservatives have so far shown no more comprehension than their Labor brethren of the needs of business. Moreover, it is going to be very difficult for them to be helpful. The change of government does not promise to make it easier to run a business in Britain, partly because the Conservatives will constantly have to trim their sails in Parliament and partly because they are likely to run into a first-class economic crisis.

Apart from the problems of international affairs, thorny enough in all conscience, there is the problem of keeping faith with rearmament in face of the financial difficulties which have been piling up. Apart from the problems of Germany, of Egypt, of Persia, there is the problem constituted by increased cost of raw materials, the dollar gap and Britain's growing deficit in her trade account with the rest of Europe. There is the problem of arresting inflation notwithstanding that the opportunities of limiting government expenditure are small.

I began by speaking of Forkers and Spooners, the two races into which the inhabitants of Britain, according to the returns of the last two elections, are about evenly divided. I shall now say why I give them those names. By "Forkers" I mean men and women capable and desirous of fending for themselves and their kindred, people who can fork a living out of the world. By "Spooners" I mean people who find a struggle with the world too much for them and who ask only to be spoonfed.

The new British government does not seem destined to please the Forkers in England. If English workers can no longer get away with murder in their jobs, if the five-day week has to go west and if there is a further fall in the standard of living, then the new government will not please the Spooners either.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. VIII, No. 45

By Frank C. Hanighen November 7, 1951

BEHIND THE PEACE PLAN: Behind a roseate smoke-screen of proposals for atom control and policing, and a world-wide peace plan, the nimble tongues of Acheson and Jessup are busy preparing to sell out American independence as a nation.

Last week, we disclosed that a certain Collective Measures Committee of the UN is the body designed to negotiate the Big Sell-out. This group will place under foreign control American defense forces, American finance and foreign policy. This week, the papers disclosed who will run this Committee -- none other than Dr. Philip Jessup. His confirmation for this job was blocked by the U.S. Senate and the Senate effectively pinned on him the label of "no confidence". It is now clear why the Administration was so anxious to obtain confirmation of this man's appointment.

So far as we can discover, however, it was not Jessup but Acheson who originated the Collective Measures scheme to surrender our nationhood. And the Secretary "pulled off", in the literal meaning of the term, this move at Ottawa last summer.

All that the American people saw at that time was the Secretary of Treasury Snyder saying "no" to British and French requests for more money. Behind this inspiring spectacle, however, there was being forged the instrument by which these nations could extract far more in funds than they now ask for. As a matter of fact, this secret plan almost leaked out; did -- to a certain extent -- leak out in the columns of one Canadian paper. It was this way: Acheson in his Ottawa speech became so indiscreet that he projected a virtual "Federal Union Now" pattern. He reportedly recoiled with dismay at his indiscretion when the Montreal Gazette recognized it for what it is and gave it this 4-column lead: "Federation of Atlantic Pact States Goal of NATO, Say Acheson, Morrison."

Thus the reality behind the "peace plan". And it is important to emphasize that peace plans are only bait to get the people to back Federal Union. Reuters (British news service) lifted the curtain a bit when on November 5 that agency reported from Paris that British and French circles say: "Truman's long range disarmament proposals would take effect when the collective security measures have been set up and consolidated." In other words, the organization of peace will be withheld until the people of the U.S. submit to the surrender of their sovereignty.

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EISENHOWER VISIT: The reason for the General's trip to Washington was not political. Nor was it military, as has been so often said. The motive came from a prominent trait in Eisenhower's character -- a trait which would make him unfit for the Presidency and which has helped to make more difficult his task of building a European Army.

That weakness in the Eisenhower make-up appeared suddenly last week in concrete -- and very important -- form, in a disagreement with Averell Harriman over the apportionment of European non-military aid. Here are the essential details:

Congress had voted the sum of $7.3 billion for foreign, principally European, aid. To Ike's dismay, Britain and France each wanted very large portions of this amount, and other NATO countries demanded unexpectedly generous shares, so that he found himself with a pie which he had to cut and which was egregiously inadequate for the slices demanded. If he asserted his authority and allocated this $7.3 billion according to his own notions, he would earn the enmity of the heads of all the western European countries. He would thereby compromise his attempt to pressure these chiefs of state into creating armies. The matter was very serious. What was he to do? Our correspondent in Paris wired us about what ensued.

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In a characteristic manner, which years ago won for him, in the Army, the label of "pass-the-buck Ike", the General told Mr. Averell Harriman in effect, "this is your baby, not mine".

But, Harriman (now Administrator of the Mutual Security Administration) has learned much of bureaucratic folkways. He firmly declined to take responsibility for the job of cutting a small pie into disappointingly small slices and, at the same time, of retaining popularity with the recipients.

Hence, Eisenhower decided to fly to Washington in an effort to persuade Truman to order Harriman to accept the role of scapegoat. (It was the General who made the decision to come home, not the President, as generally reported.)

We have no information up to the hour of going to press as to whether or not Eisenhower succeeded in accomplishing this. But, we hear that Ike is perfectly willing to advise Harriman how to apportion the aid, provided Harriman takes the full responsibility.

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THAT BYRD SPEECH: We have read a number of press accounts of the epochal speech of Senator Byrd at Selma, Alabama (November 1) and found these reportings epochally bad. For, we got a copy of the speech and found in it unreported statements which ought to be news anywhere.

For instance, despite the oft-repeated comments that Byrd will have nothing to do with the Mundt Plan or with working with Northern Republicans, here is what he says: "We would be much further on the road to Truman ruin if it had not been for the frequently effective coalition between most of the Southern Democrats in Congress with some of the Republicans in voting on Socialistic legislation. As one Southern Constitutional Democrat, I am proud to have been an active member of a coalition for this purpose."

A few paragraphs later Byrd makes a serious charge against Truman: "I assert that Senator Humphrey was deliberately selected by the President of the United States to introduce this [FEPC] legislation, and deliberately chosen by the President to be his civil rights mouthpiece on the floor of the Senate." These are fighting words down South.

Finally, for those who doubt that the Southern Democrats really "mean business" the following should be a warning: ". . . the democracy of the South can save the REAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, if we take courageous action, even if this means reformation and reorganization of the National Party."

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THE PROBLEM OF TAFT: The only avowed candidate for the Presidency is hard at it. Making speeches from one end of the country to the other, Taft is unrolling his gospel for all to see and hear. But the question is -- do the electorate see and hear?

From some who have accompanied him, we learn that he has made much progress locally, wherever he goes; but that his off-the-cuff speeches are not heard nationally nor have national effect. What is the reason? Apart from technical difficulties (i.e., Taft's failure to prepare his speeches and release them in advance to the press), it seems to us that we have here the real problem of Taft. We will explain.

In the past fortnight, Taft has made two great statements about certain anguishing problems that concern everybody. (1) He has proposed creation of a commission to adjust our military needs to our economic realities. And (2) he has underlined the failure of the UN as a means to peace. If we continue to spend ourselves into bankruptcy, there will be little left to defend -- no matter how effective the weapons. If we remain enmeshed in the coils of an insidious so-called organization for peace, we will have lost our independence as a nation.

But what was the response to these statesmanlike utterances? Did the people see and hear? Apart from the immediate audiences and a few understanding newspapers, the answer is "no". A proposal for a commission of that character should have

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been met by the announcement of the formation of a national committee to boost it, to push the matter and to get action. As for the assault on the UN, long ere this there should have been a counterorganization to challenge the Association for the UN (the well-heeled privately-financed body which keeps propagandizing for the international organization). Administration propaganda experts always create such bodies or see that they are created. A counterorganization "for American independence" should have been organizing and distributing literature to support its cause. If it had, a nation-wide roar of approval last week would have welcomed Taft's statements.

In short, Taft's utterances found no such "sounding boards" in civic life to make his words echo back and forth throughout the nation and to infuse them into popular consciousness. The lack of these is one of his greatest handicaps.

Whose fault? Not Taft's. Principally, we can locate the failure of responsibility in Mr. Buckley's own answer to his question in his article of two weeks ago, "Who Killed Adam Smith?". As Mr. Buckley points out, the Capitalists who should be defending the free system do not organize, nor put up the money for organizations, foundations, publications, etc., which defend the free system. The Capitalists who support Taft are either stupidly donating money to foundations which oppose his ideas, or are complacently waiting for his triumph at the polls, while doing nothing.

In essence, the problem of Taft is not necessarily connected with Taft at all. The problem is one of supporting and propagating ideas of which Taft happens to be the most eloquent advocate, of combatting the ideas of which he is most frequently the antagonist in the political arena. If this idea warfare were successfully prosecuted, there need be no worry about whether Taft is nominated and elected.

CHRISTMAS GIFT OFFER

TIMES DO CHANGE: Not so long ago, Socialism had no press except what its advocates kept alive with acts of devotion. Now that the ideology has gained wide acceptance, the mass circulation papers have taken it up, and there is hardly any need for a doctrinaire Socialistic press. Today, the publication that espouses individualism speaks for a minority, and with a minority the mass circulation papers have nothing to do. Therefore, it becomes necessary for the individualistic minority to support its torch-bearers, even as the Socialists supported theirs in the olden days. . . . Which brings us to you and Christmas. Please include HUMAN EVENTS in your Christmas gift list. Special prices for these gift subscriptions, beginning December 19, as follows:

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THE $64 BOND QUESTION: We learn from the Wall Street Journal (Oct. 31) that the citizenry are shying away from Uncle Sam's I.O.U.'s (Treasury savings bonds). In the first nine months of this year, $2,819 millions of these promissory notes were turned in for cash; against that, the best the Government salesmen could do was to get the public to take $2,392 million worth. We have no doubt that the Government will be able to meet the deficit somehow; probably the banks will come to its aid, and, as a last resort, there is always the printing press.

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On May 24, 1950, we published an article entitled "Bonds Bursting in Air". In that article, it was pointed out that the total of these savings bonds that would mature this year was, in round figures, $1,500 million. In 1952, just under $4,000 million; in 1953, $6,800 million; in 1954, $8,700 million; in 1955, $7,500 million. After 1955 for five years the maturing claims hold to around $5,000 million each year.

Now, the big question is: if the Government finds it difficult to resell the comparatively small amount of its I.O.U.'s that came due this year, how will it get the money to pay the claimants in the years to come? We have canvassed experts for their opinion, but so far they disclose no solution.

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FREEDOM FOR FOOLISHNESS: The latest in taxation is the federal levy on bookmaking. The government's "bite" on bets placed with brokers is big enough to make their business unprofitable; so much so, that the brokers face the alternative of going underground to avoid payment, or of going out of business. One Congressman said, when the bill was before the House, that a vote for this betting tax was a vote against sin. The levy is another attempt to legislate the American people into goodness. One of the provisions of the law requires bookmakers to pay a license fee, thus exposing themselves to prosecution from the authorities in those localities where bookmaking is illegal; this is a muffled death-knell.

For those who are interested in the myth of political morals, this law should be an object lesson. If it is sinful to bet, or to take bets, then it is more sinful for the government to partake in the business, since the government demands a rake-off without furnishing any service. It is heads-I-win-tails-you-lose as far as the government is concerned, and that is pure swindle.

But, more important than this bit of hypocrisy is the use of the revenue collecting powers of the government for policing the people. Implied in this law is the idea that betting is an evil practice, something Americans ought not to do, and ought to be prevented from doing. Anyone who bets is a damn fool.

But, it is the freedom to make a damn fool of oneself that is the basis of all freedom, for of a certainty every one of us is a damn fool in the opinion of somebody else.

We surmise that the American damn fool will insist on enjoying the freedom to bet -- and that the bookmakers will help him by circumventing the sumptuary law. Also, we surmise that some of the minions of the law -- in traditional fashion -- will lend a helping hand.

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EDUCATION AND TAXES: The U.S. Tax Court has decided that the Joseph B. Eastman Corp., distributors of automotive parts, must pay taxes on its income, even though the business is operated for the benefit of Amherst College. The same Court rendered a similar decision in the famous case of the C. F. Mueller Co., manufacturers of macaroni, operating for the benefit of New York University; that decision, however, was reversed by the U.S. Circuit Court and the tax-exempt educational institution does not have to share with the U.S. Treasury any of the profits from the sale of macaroni. Presumably, the Amherst-Eastman decision will be appealed.

There is an angle to this tax-evasion business (and that is all it is) which is extra-legal. Since the government is a generous benefactor of education (through outright grants and the payment of veterans' tuition fees), why should it oppose the ownership of commercial businesses by tax-exempt colleges? Rather, why should it want to collect income taxes from such concerns and then turn over to the colleges the funds it collects? This seems to be a lot of waste effort.

But, then, the government may have another consideration: that a self-sustaining educational institution is not likely to be as amenable to political pressure as one dependant on subsidies for its sustenance.

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